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Part III: Clinical Departments and Divisions --- Chapter 27: Department of Dermatology (pages 457-464)

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Department of Dermatology

LAWRENCE C. PARISH, M.D.

“The skin possesses the closest relations with the general economy, as shown by the observation that there are comparatively few so-called general diseases in which it . . . is not at some period involved in a slight or a marked degree.”

—LOUIS A. DUHRING (1845–1913)

DERMATOLOGY HAS been an independent Department at Jefferson for eight decades. It has grown from a unit that merely gave lectures and provided clinics for indigent patients to a modern Department fully approved by the American Board of Dermatology for the training of residents. Its clinical facility provides advanced methods of treatment including state-of-the-art lasers, and the faculty has both national and international reputation.

Early Instruction in Treatment of Skin Diseases

Teaching the treatment of skin diseases did not have official recognition at the Medical College until 1866. That year, Jefferson and Bellevue Hospital Medical College of New York both created lectureships on dermatology and venereal disease. Presentations on diseases of the skin had

been given in New York as early as 1829, and in 1861 Harvard had established such lectureships. Thus, only two other institutions considered dermatology important enough to offer any instruction before Jefferson did.

Some of the student notebooks of the mid-nineteenth century indicate that skin disease was occasionally included in the course work. For example, T. B. Gibbons in 1854 records that at the Jefferson Medical College Clinic held at Pennsylvania Hospital, diseases of the skin being treated were “erythema, roseola, urticaria, strophulus, lichen, prurigo, herpes zoster, acne, etc.” Diagnosis and treatment were extremely rudimentary at that time, and were probably regarded as unworthy of more attention in the curriculum.

When the surgeon Francis F. Maury (Jefferson, 1862) began his series of dermatology lectures for the academic year 1866–1867, a new era began. Dermatology, which had developed in Paris at L'Hôpital St. Louis earlier in the 1800s and now was flourishing in Vienna under Hebra, was making inroads in America. Specialty medicine, spearheaded by the Civil War, was just beginning to dislodge the notion that a good physician knew all phases of diagnosis and therapeutics. Although Maury (Figure 27-1) died of tuberculosis in 1879, he made a significant contribution to the teaching of dermatology at Jefferson as well as to the entire evolving specialty during his brief career. Jeffersonians, undoubtedly, had more understanding of cutaneous diseases than did other medical students of the era. Maury should also be remembered for having founded the *Photographic Review of Medicine and Surgery*, published for two years beginning in 1871, with Louis A. Duhring, the first Professor of Dermatology at the University of Pennsylvania (1875–1913). That journal was unique in providing practitioners with pictures of interesting cases in color with text that adequately described the problems and treatments of the period.

Samuel W. Gross (Jefferson, 1857), who with his father is intertwined with so much of Jefferson history in the nineteenth century, became the next lecturer. As early as 1839 his father, Samuel D. Gross (Jefferson, 1828), had given the first American description of cutaneous pathology in his textbook *Elements of Pathological Anatomy*. It seemed appropriate when Maury became terminally ill that Samuel W. Gross (Figure 27-2) should take charge of the skin program, giving lectures for the spring session.

In 1884 John V. Shoemaker (Jefferson, 1874), who would become Professor of Dermatology and Dean of the Medico-Chirurgical College (later merged into the Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania), took over the Jefferson lectureships on cutaneous diseases “with practical demonstrations” until 1887. He had distinguished himself by organizing the Pennsylvania Free Dispensary for Skin Diseases, which became the American Hospital for Skin Diseases. Here, the first residency program in dermatology was begun in 1880.

William Joseph Hearn (Jefferson, 1867), from the Department of Surgery, gave the lectures for the next year (1888). He probably was delegated the responsibility because he had been Maury's



FIG. 27-1. Francis F. Maury (Jefferson, 1862), a surgeon who gave the first lectures on dermatology (1866–1879).

almost no clinical exposure; thus Harlingen's *Handbook of the Diagnosis and Treatment of Skin Diseases* (1884) was useful.

Departmental Status Achieved

When Henry W. Stelwagon (Figure 27-4) was appointed in 1890, a new period in dermatology began. Stelwagon also had been a pupil of Duhring's. In 1892, he became the first Clinical Professor of Dermatology and in 1904 the first full Professor. Stelwagon brought with him a wealth of clinical experience. He was well liked by his colleagues and the students and perhaps is most famous for his textbook, *Treatise on Diseases of the Skin* (1902), which went through nine editions (1921). His lectures were illustrated by hand-painted drawings. Stelwagon also was instrumental in merging the Dispensary for Skin Diseases, founded in 1870, with Jefferson Hospital. This clinic had been founded by Duhring, through his father's financial support, to provide clinic services

pupil and later Gross's chief of clinic and anesthetizer (depicted by Eakins in *The Gross Clinic*). Hearn (Figure 27-3) had a particular interest in tumors, and his dermatologic career was short-lived.

From 1888 to 1890, one of Duhring's former students, Arthur Van Harlingen, who later would help to found and serve as a Professor at the Philadelphia Polyclinic (merged with the Graduate School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania), developed a program for the students. This was a period when the lectures were sometimes an integral part of the course and at other times constituted auxiliary courses of several weeks' duration. Students were given

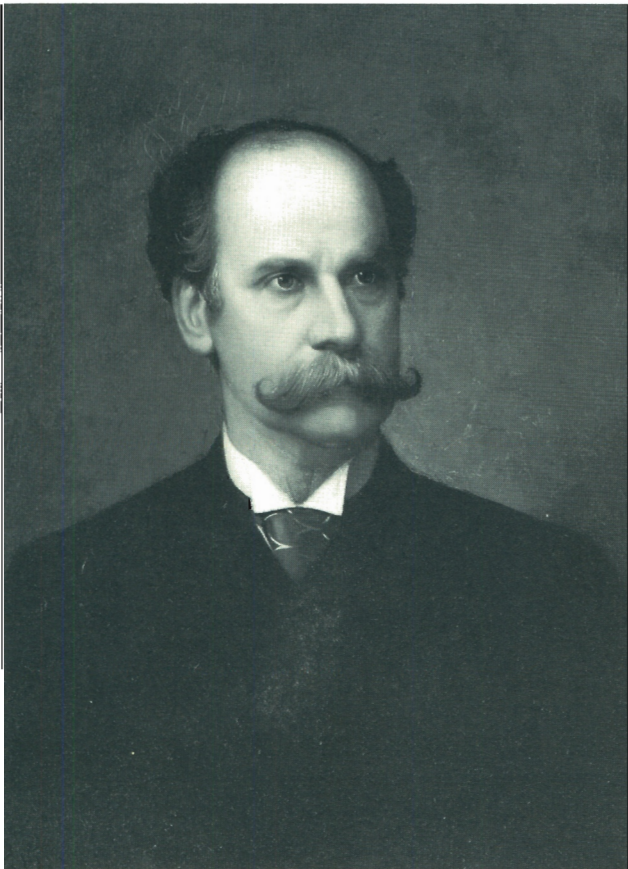


FIG. 27-2. Samuel W. Gross (Jefferson, 1857), the "younger Gross," lectured on dermatology (1880–1884).

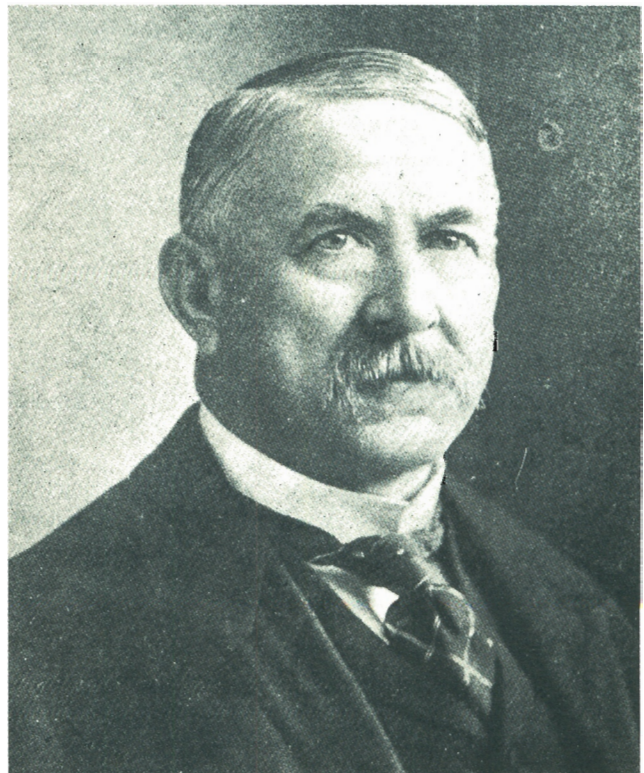


FIG. 27-3. William J. Hearn (Jefferson, 1867) gave dermatology lectures for 1887–1888. He was the anesthetizer in Eakins' *The Gross Clinic*.

for patients with skin disease, something that had been distinctly absent in Philadelphia. Department status was granted to dermatology, as it had been to most of the other clinical departments, in 1906.

Following Stelwagon's resignation in 1918 because of heart disease, Jay Frank Schamberg (Figure 27-5) served as Professor for two years before moving to the Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania, where he would also serve as a Vice-Dean. Schamberg was particularly interested in contagious diseases and wrote two books, *Compend of Diseases of the Skin* (1898) and *Disease of the Skin and the Eruptive Fevers* (1908). In 1917 his Dermatological Research Laboratories had successfully synthesized arsphenamine and neoarsphenamine, making America no longer dependent upon Germany for supplies in the treatment of syphilis.



FIG. 27-4. Henry W. Stelwagon, Clinical Professor (1892), full Professor (1904), and First Chairman of the Dermatology Department (1906–1918).

Frank Grozer Knowles, M.D., Chairman (1920–1946)

In 1920 Frank Crozer Knowles (Figure 27-6) became Professor of Dermatology and was the first to carry the title of Head of the Department. During his tenure, Knowles created a warm atmosphere in dermatology, and the students enjoyed his teaching in the clinic. His textbook *Diseases of the Skin*, first published in 1914, proved to be so popular that it went through four editions (1942). The Class of 1937 dedicated *The Clinic* to him, and students formed the Knowles Dermatology Society. The class of 1939 presented his portrait to the college. When he died of



FIG. 27-5. Jay F. Schamberg, Chairman of Dermatology (1918–1920).

multiple myeloma in 1957, Knowles had amassed one of the finest collections of Chinese porcelain in the country.

Subsequent Changes

In 1947 and again in 1949, Edward F. Corson (Figure 27-7) became Head of the Department. He was a good clinician who earned the respect of the students. Clarence S. Livingood (Figure 27-8) assumed the Chairmanship in 1948. A year later, he would move to Galveston, Texas, to become Professor of Dermatology at the University of

Texas Medical Branch, and still later, his career would take him to Detroit as Head of Dermatology at Henry Ford Hospital. In his short term at Jefferson, he embarked upon a program to enlarge inpatient service and to effect a temporary affiliation with the Skin and Cancer Hospital, which was then located at Eighth and Pine Streets.

In 1950 Henry B. Decker (Jefferson, 1920) became Chairman of the Department (Figure 27-9). As the size of Jefferson's classes grew, so did the importance of dermatology. Decker conducted several clinics in the famous old Clinic in the Curtis Building. The dermatology clerkship was a required course, with each day's clinical session followed by a "coffee hour" under the auspices of Dr. Decker. He was a student of United States history and particularly that of the State of New Jersey, in which he served as President of the Medical Society. He became Emeritus in the Dermatology Chair in 1958 and died in 1976.



FIG. 27-6. Frank C. Knowles, first to carry title of "Head of Department" (1920–1947).



FIG. 27-7. Edward F. Corson, twice Head of the Department (1947 and 1949).

The Luscombe Years (1959–1986)

Herbert A. Luscombe (Figure 27-10) (Jefferson, 1940) assumed the Chairmanship in 1959. During this era, important progress was made in developing a modern Department. Under Luscombe's direction, the Residency was transformed in 1975 into a fully accredited three-year program—until then it had comprised two years at Jefferson and the third year in a didactic course at the Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. By 1986 more than 35 Residents had been trained; that group constitutes the Luscombe Club, organized in 1983, that meets at the time of the annual convention of the American Academy of Dermatology. In 1973 the clinic moved to the Edison building and in 1978 to the new Hospital. The medical students received the option of electing clinical clerkships in dermatology as part of the specialty rotation.

Dr. Luscombe served as President of the Alumni Association in 1971, and his portrait was presented to the College in 1977. His teaching excellence was recognized nationally when he received the Clark W. Finnerud Award for Teaching from the Dermatology Foundation in

1981. In 1983 the Herbert A. Luscombe Lectureship was established to bring distinguished dermatologists to Jefferson as a way of noting progress in other institutions.

In November, 1986, Dr. Luscombe retired from his position after having served as Chairman at Jefferson for 27 years, the longest term of leadership of any Dermatology Department in the United States. At that time the faculty, in addition to the Chairman, comprised three Professors (Drs. Charles H. Greenbaum, Young Chai Kauh, and Lawrence C. Parish), a Visiting Professor (Dr. Francisco Kerdel-Vegas), and ten other members. Dr. Henry H. Perlman (Jefferson, 1918) deserves special mention for having initiated pediatric



FIG. 27-8. Clarence S. Livingood, Chairman (1948–1949).



FIG. 27 9. Henry B. Decker (Jefferson, 1920), Chairman (1950–1959).

dermatology as a subspecialty in this country (Figure 27-11). In the early 1980s Perlman was made the first Honorary Member of the Pediatric Dermatology Society.

The Molecular Era Begins: Jouni Uitto, M.D., Ph.D., Chairman (1986–)

Dr. Luscombe was succeeded by Jouni Uitto, M.D., Ph.D., (Figure 27-12), an internationally renowned dermatologist and biochemist

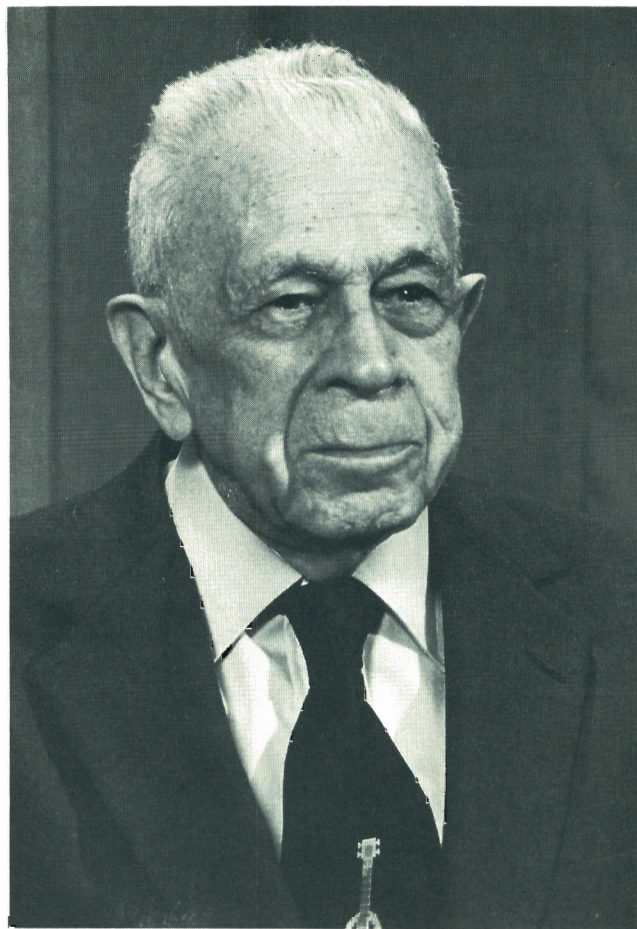


FIG. 27-11. Henry H. Perlman, M.D. (Jefferson, 1918), pioneer Pediatric Dermatologist.



FIG. 27-10. Herbert A. Luscombe (Jefferson, 1940), Chairman (1959–1986).

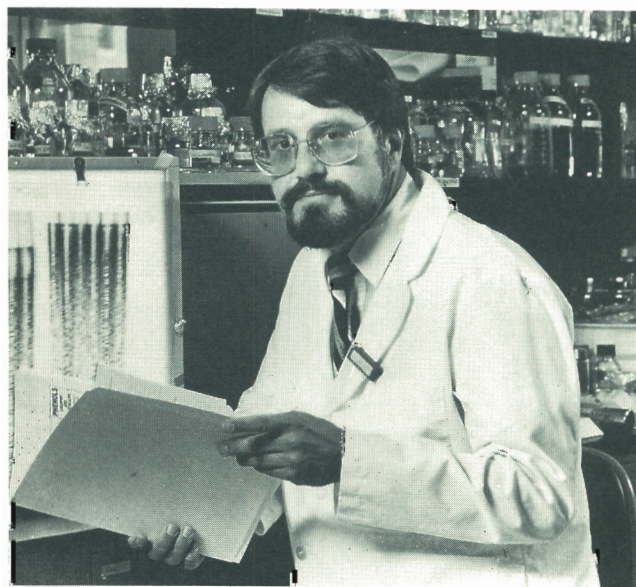


FIG. 27-12. Jouni Uitto, M.D., Ph.D., Chairman (1986–).

recognized for his basic science and clinical research in the field of connective tissue metabolism. Dr. Uitto, a native of Finland, received his degrees from the University of Helsinki and undertook his dermatology training at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. Dr. Uitto came to Jefferson from the University of California (Los Angeles) School of Medicine, where he was Professor of Medicine as well as Associate Chief and Director of Research of the Division of Dermatology at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. Uitto's previous faculty appointments were at Washington University School of Medicine and the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-Rutgers Medical School. Dr. Uitto is a long-time collaborator with Dr. Darwin J. Prockop, currently Chairman of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Director of the newly established Jefferson Institute of Molecular Medicine. This collaboration now continues within this Institute, where dermatology is represented as a Section of Molecular Dermatology.

During the initial year of Dr. Uitto's appointment, the Department grew ever larger, and currently has nine full-time faculty members, including Chief of the Division of Cutaneous Surgery, Dr. Gary P. Lask, and Chief of the Division of Dermatopathology, Dr. Richard H.

Jacoby. The faculty also includes three Ph.D. members with state-of-the-art expertise in molecular biology.

One of the latest Department developments is the establishment of the Jefferson Center for International Dermatology, under joint Directorship of Drs. Lawrence C. Parish and Jouni Uitto. The Center serves as a catalyst for development of programs in the varied areas of international dermatology, including residency exchange training, faculty development, education in geographic and topical dermatology, and enhancement of investigative dermatology.

The plans for future expansion of the Department call for vigorous development of teaching, research, and patient care activities, to bring Jefferson Dermatology recognition both nationally and internationally as a center of excellence. The Department faces an exciting era in which interdisciplinary involvement will open new frontiers well supported by its rich history.